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RUEHKM/AMEMBASSY KAMPALA PRIORITY 0008
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 04 MADRID 001966

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YAOUNDE FOR MALABO
AF/FO FOR DAS DONALD YAMAMOTO

E.O. 12958: DECL: 07/18/2016
TAGS: [PREL](#) [EAID](#) [SMIG](#) [SOCI](#) [SP](#) [XY](#)
SUBJECT: PLAN AFRICA: SPAIN INTRODUCES SELF TO NEIGHBORS

REF: STATE 112788

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Classified By: A/DCM Whitney Baird; reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

11. (C) SUMMARY: On July 26, Vice President Fernandez de la Vega officially rolled out Plan Africa, an ambitious project developed by the Zapatero government to address what it perceives to be a glaring hole in Spanish foreign policy. Prompted both by fears of international terrorism and by more recent and somewhat alarmist public clamor over illegal immigration, the Zapatero government has committed Spain to a three year initiative that will significantly expand Spanish diplomatic and assistance programs in Sub-Saharan Africa and also strengthen immigration controls. Spain's projected assistance budget for Africa in 2008 (120 million euros) will quadruple its 2003 expenditures. GOS contacts have repeatedly expressed interest in working with the United States in Africa; Post has indicated some possible avenues for cooperation (PARA. 8). END SUMMARY.

12. (U) Emboffs met with MFA Subdirector General for Africa Antonio Sanchez-Benedito Gaspar on July 18 to deliver a letter from former Deputy Secretary Zoellick to Deputy Foreign Minister Bernardino Leon (reftel) regarding bilateral cooperation in Africa and specifically in Equatorial Guinea. Sanchez-Benedito thanked Emboffs and said that Plan Africa was now complete and would be officially rolled out by Vice President Maria Teresa Fernandez de la Vega at a July 26 ceremony. He described the plan as "ambitious but directed, with concrete targets, clear objectives and a finite scope."

13. (U) Sanchez-Benedito said that Sub-Saharan Africa represents a "final frontier" of sorts for Spanish diplomacy - an area which Spain has neglected for centuries but is now looking to engage on a wide variety of issues. The Spanish feel that they are uniquely positioned to serve as an honest broker on behalf of the EU in Africa, both because of their geographic proximity and cultural links to the region and because Spain has much less of a negative imperialist legacy in Africa than other Western European nations. Sanchez-Benedito pointed to West Africa as a region that has received very little attention of late yet has important historical connections dating from the time of the Muslim occupation of Spain. While Spain has had relationships with nations in Southern Africa since the 1970s, he noted that these relationships were mostly centered on fishing rights and other economic concerns. Sanchez-Benedito singled out Mali, Mauritania, and Equatorial Guinea, the only former Spanish colony in Sub-Saharan Africa, as three nations of particular importance.

Motivation: "New African Reality", Self-Interest

14. (U) The "new African reality" of notable democratic advances coexisting with continuing widespread misery and conflict, coupled with concern that certain regions of Africa represent ideal growth opportunities for international terrorist organizations, has prompted Spain to undertake this initiative. The plan notes that Spanish society feels a "calling to solidarity" with Africa, as well as a renewed

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spirit favoring multilateral endeavors and a more relevant global role for Spain. In one highly visible recent episode, Spanish tourists became voluntary aid workers when a boat carrying nearly 100 dehydrated and starving West Africans pulled ashore at a popular beach in the Canary Islands.

15. (U) On the other hand, critics accuse the Zapatero government of producing this plan solely to provide cover for their main goal of discouraging illegal immigration from Sub-Saharan Africa. The GOS replies that although it is a highly visible and easily sensationalized phenomenon, the "African exodus" represents only a tiny fraction of total Spanish immigration. (COMMENT: This is true, but this illegal immigration is the most damaging to the government's image. END COMMENT.) Furthermore, immigration, with its corresponding supply of cheap labor, is one of the factors propping up the Spanish economy.

16. (U) Counter-migration strategies represent an important part of the plan, according to Deputy Foreign Minister Bernardino Leon, but they are merely a part, not the key objective. In a May 21 interview with Spanish daily El Pais, Leon noted that Sub-Saharan migrants represent a meager three percent of total immigrants to Spain. He called alarmist claims of an African exodus "pure demagoguery." When asked if the GOS really thinks it can fix Africa, Leon stated the issue plainly: "What should we do? Stand with our arms crossed while Africa empties itself of its youth, either through emigration or AIDS?" He said Spain's plan would complement other existing initiatives such as those of the European Union, the G-8, the United Kingdom and China.

The Plan

17. (U) The GOS has identified seven main objectives for Plan Africa:

A.--Financing Democracy, Human Rights, Peace & Security--

Included under this objective are existing contributions to elections in Ivory Coast and Democratic Republic of Congo, a commitment to contribute to future election operations, bilateral efforts on human rights, engagement with the African Union and a commitment to increase contributions to peacekeeping operations in Africa. Additional goals include the enactment of Cooperation Protocols on Security and Defense with Angola, Namibia, Mozambique and South Africa, and the ratification by African nations of international conventions on terrorism and justice, as agreed to at a May 2006 Ministerial Round Table on Terrorism, hosted by Spain.

B.--Fight Poverty, Develop Sub-Saharan Africa--

This objective includes programs for food assistance, education, water/sanitation, urban housing, gender equity and public health. Further, Spain will provide technical assistance and advice to African fishing and agricultural industries, as well as tourist sectors. Spain also intends to remain a leader in debt forgiveness, with an eventual total cancellation of 800 million euros through the Gleneagles initiative, as well as bilateral cancellation of 200 million dollars.

C.--Cooperation with African Nations on Migration--

This objective puts in place domestic border controls and resources for immigrant integration. It also seeks to

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establish bilateral agreements on migration and repatriation with Senegal, Mali, Ghana, Cameroon, Ivory Coast, Cape Verde, Guinea, and the Gambia. Additionally, Spain cosponsored and co-organized with Morocco the first Ministerial Conference on Migration and Development among European and African nations.

Spain considers the summit, which took place in Rabat on July 10-11, a success and proof of their emerging leadership role in the EU on African concerns.

D.--Active Participation in the EU-Africa Strategy--

Spain intends to actively involve itself in EU policies on Africa, especially in peace and security matters, as well as supporting the second EU-Africa summit in Lisbon.

E.--Commercial Investment, Fishing, Energy Security--

Spain runs a modest trade deficit with Sub-Saharan Africa. Spanish exports to Sub-Saharan Africa amount to only 4 percent of total European exports to the region, compared to 21 percent each for France and Germany. Spain intends to counter this trade imbalance by capitalizing on geographical proximity, Spain's squeaky clean image in Africa (as compared to France and Germany), and Spanish industry's recent experiences in successfully globalizing their operations via Latin America. The plan identifies South Africa, Nigeria, Equatorial Guinea, Ghana, Namibia, Uganda and Cameroon as nations of immediate interest. Spain will use development assistance funds both to stimulate growth and to promote Spanish businesses in the region. It will also seek to earmark funds from the World Bank for infrastructure and employment projects in its areas of interest.

On fishing, Spain will maintain or renegotiate its 1970s-era fishing agreements with most coastal African nations and will seek to establish respect for sustainability in African fisheries, as well as targeting EU funds to modernize African fishing industries.

Spain will press for the inclusion of Spanish energy firms in exploratory operations in Africa, as well as taking measures to support the democratic and financial rights of citizens in hydrocarbon producing countries. Target areas are the Gulf of Guinea, Nigeria, Gabon, Equatorial Guinea, San Tome and Principe, and Angola.

F.--Cultural and Scientific Cooperation--

Spain will increase by 20% their cultural budgets in African embassies, as well as increasing their cultural staff. Additionally, Spain will create Spanish language classrooms

and Cervantes Institutes in several African countries. Scientific cooperation will be in the form of technical advice and exchanges. Lastly, Spain will inaugurate Casa Africa, a regional center focused on Spanish-African relations, in Las Palmas, Canary Islands.

G.--Expansion of Political and Institutional Presence -- Spain's diplomatic presence in Africa has remained basically unchanged since the 1970s, with 17 embassies. Spain will open embassies in Mali, Sudan and Cape Verde, cooperation offices in Cape Verde, Ethiopia and Mali, and Defense Attache offices in Cape Verde, Senegal and Gabon. Additionally, Spain will be creating new positions in almost all of its African embassies to expand their diplomatic presence in the region. The Spanish Foreign Ministry will also create an Africa working group with civil society leaders.

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Requests for USG Cooperation

18. (C) Spanish officials including VP de la Vega, FM Moratinos, Deputy FM Leon, and Director General for the Mediterranean, Middle East and Africa Alvaro Iranzo have expressed interest in working with the USG on Africa development issues. We look forward to working with the Africa Bureau to review possible areas for joint collaboration. Countries of mutual interest include but are not limited to Equatorial Guinea, Nigeria, Sudan, and Congo. Possible areas for cooperation include justice and democracy building, development assistance coordination, counter-terrorism, human rights, organized crime, narco-trafficking and global health.

Comment

19. (C) While Plan Africa says all the right things with respect to development, it is certainly as preoccupied with abating the perceived hordes of Sub-Saharan African migrants heading to Spain as it is with improving conditions in Africa. Deputy FM Leon practically said as much at a June 23 press conference in Bamako when he noted that "Spain does not have the capacity to accept more workers." Nevertheless, the fact that Spain has repeatedly sought U.S. input and cooperation in this area is an indication of their sincerity and presents an opportunity to direct Spanish diplomacy and funds toward key U.S. policy goals, simultaneously improving visuals on bilateral relations.
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